

NUTS & SEEDS REPORT

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species begin to produce and domestic tonnage increases significantly.

“Confectionery traditionally drives demand on a world level; however, the big driver now is the popularity of hazelnut spreads,” Owen says. In addition, consumers are embracing the flavor in coffee, snacks and liqueur.

CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES CITED

However, not all challenges are environmental. According to Robert Parker, CEO of the National Peanut Board, although research and advances in efficiencies have improved yield by one-third in the past decade, domestic demand has lagged. Parker attributes the downturn to consumer misconceptions about peanuts and their nutritional qualities.

For example, he reports Americans believe the incidence of peanut allergy is 40 times

higher than that reported by the National Institutes of Health. “About one percent of the population has a peanut allergy, and there’s minimal risk of an allergic reaction from airborne exposure,” he says.

In response, the board is launching two growth initiatives, one aimed toward educators; the other, toward manufacturers. The first is an interactive, science-based website to help educators better understand the misperceptions of consumers. It includes social media, events and advertising campaigns to promote peanuts and peanut butter for breakfast and snacks. The second campaign encourages manufacturers to use peanuts, as well as defatted peanut paste and flour, and highly refined peanut oil, which Parker says contains no allergens.

Although sunflower and other seeds aren’t associated with allergic responses, Sandbakken says the association asked the FDA to clarify whether they fall under food safety regulations.

In addition to food safety issues, he says maintaining an adequate supply and demand for seeds and related products and keeping them an economically competitive option with other crops are among the organization’s agenda. Notwithstanding, Sandbakken foresees growth for the drought-resistant crop in new plains regions and market potential as an ingredient because of the seed’s health profile, clean taste and ability to accept seasonings.

CANDY, SNACK MAKERS ADAPT

For candy and snack manufacturers, the biggest challenge is whether quality, quantity and cost will become obstacles to ensuring products remain consistent with brand standards.

“This has been a difficult year for getting commodities in on a timely basis, and there has been no consistency in size,” observes Vice-President, Sales and Marketing Mike Swiatkowski, Hickory Harvest Foods, adding that although size is rarely an indication of flavor or quality, consumers perceive it differently, and meeting their expectation is a priority.

The company processes nuts and seeds for wholesale as well as private-label snacks and trail mixes, and is grappling with quality and supply challenges, balancing prices and costs, and managing global supply chain issues. “With prices going up, it could cause some of our customers to shift to other types of products,” Swiatkowski notes, although he concedes: “Demand is growing, and keeping up with it is a challenge.”

Although manufacturers work closely with suppliers to forecast demand and pricing, developing production strategies to respond to worst-case scenarios is essential.

“You really have to wait for the right time of

A NUTRITIONAL SCORECARD



SEEDS AND NUTS ARE NUTRITIONAL gold mines, and scientific research within the past decade has suggested a broad range of health benefits associated with moderate daily consumption. For example:

Almond, walnut, pistachio and hazelnut consumption has been associated with reduced risk of death from cardiovascular disease, cancer and other major diseases and the nuts offer antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.



A one-ounce serving of **almonds** adds 13 essential nutrients to chocolate, including four grams of fiber, six grams of protein and vitamin E.



Nuts and seeds are high in protein and dietary fiber and rich in vitamins E and K.

In addition to being a good source of potassium, magnesium, and phytochemicals, **pistachios** also contain lutein and anthocyanin.



Cashews are a source of copper for healthy skin and hair, magnesium for strong bones, and dietary fiber. They’re also rich in cancer-fighting proanthocyanidins.



Studies suggest **walnuts** can lower blood pressure and cholesterol, improve cognitive health and reduce the onset and progression of Alzheimer’s disease.

A 100g portion of **sunflower seeds** has 21g of protein; they are rich in linoleic acid, polyphenol compounds, vitamin E, folic acid and minerals. Data show they help in lowering LDL and raising HDL cholesterol, reducing blood sugar levels, improving energy, aiding bone mineralization and red blood cell production, and regulating cardiac and skeletal muscle activities.



Hazelnuts and almonds are gluten-free and can be eaten by gluten-sensitive, wheat-allergic and celiac disease patients.



Peanuts contain more than 30 essential vitamins and minerals and are high in protein and unsaturated fats. Eating peanuts can decrease the risk of heart disease, reduce hunger and protect cells from oxidative stress. **CST**

SOURCES: ALMOND BOARD OF CALIFORNIA, NATIONAL SUNFLOWER ASSOCIATION, HAZELNUT MARKETING BOARD, 22DAYSNUTRITION.COM, NATIONAL PEANUT BOARD, CALIFORNIA WALNUT COMMISSION AND AMERICAN PISTACHIO GROWERS